



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 January 2023

by Lewis Condé BSc (Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/P1750/W/22/3298725

**RSR13817 - Bridge Road Streetworks, Bridge Road, Farnborough,
Rushmoor GU14 0EU**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by CK Hutchison Networks (UK) Ltd against the decision of Rushmoor Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00856/TELEPP, dated 29 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 23 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'The installation of a 20 metre high monopole supporting 6 no. antennas and 2 no. transmission dishes, 4 no. equipment cabinets and development works ancillary thereto'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (GPDO), under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A, Paragraph A.3(4) require the local planning authority to assess the proposed development solely on the basis of its siting and appearance, taking into account any representations received. My determination of this appeal has been made on the same basis.
3. The principle of development is established by the GPDO and the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO do not require that regard be given to the development plan. I have had regard to the policies of the Rushmoor Local Plan 2014-2032 (adopted 2019) (the Local Plan), and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) only in so far as they are a material consideration relevant to matters of siting and appearance.

Main Issues

4. In the context of the above, the main issues are the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposed installation on the character and appearance of the area, the living conditions of nearby occupants with regards to outlook and, if any harm would occur, whether it is outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed taking into account any suitable alternative sites.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The proposed development would comprise a monopole to which antennas would be attached measuring a total of 20m in height, along with associated ground level equipment cabinets. It is intended to provide 5G network coverage to the area surrounding the appeal site. The proposed development would have a functional appearance, typical of telecommunications equipment found in urban areas generally.
6. The appeal site is in a highly prominent position within a wide footway, on a busy main thoroughfare, near the junction between Cove Road and Bridge Road. The proposal would sit to the front of 82 – 86 Cove Road, a three-storey property that contains commercial uses at groundfloor level with residential units above. The surrounding area also predominantly contains commercial properties alongside residential units.
7. Due to its scale and siting the development would be highly visible within the street scene and surrounding area, particularly from locations to the west and east along Cove Road and the Bridge Road junction. There is existing nearby street furniture, such as streetlights and telegraph poles. However, the proposed monopole and antenna would be far taller than any other feature within the immediate surroundings of the site.
8. The proposed development would also extend significantly above the roofline of the adjacent building and would be significantly taller than nearby trees. The level of screening that would be provided by these surrounding features is therefore somewhat limited. Indeed, a substantial extent of the monopole would be viewed against the skyline. This includes the bulky antenna headframe.
9. The appellant has indicated that the lowest possible mast height required in the area has been specified, whilst the finishing colour has been selected to help assimilate the proposal with its surroundings. Nevertheless, I still consider that it would appear as a particularly prominent and visually intrusive form of development that would be incongruous with the surrounding streetscene.
10. Therefore, regarding its sitting and appearance, and despite the lack of any statutory area designations, the proposed development would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area.

Living Conditions

11. The appeal site is close to several residential properties, with the properties that would be most acutely affected being those on the upper floors of 82 – 86 Cove Street. Although the proposal would impact on the outlook from these properties, I am satisfied that it would not result in unacceptable impacts on living conditions of nearby residents in terms of outlook. This is due to the distance between the proposal and neighbouring windows and also that the larger elements of the proposal (e.g. cabinets, antenna) would not directly align with residential windows.

Availability of Alternative Sites

12. The appellant has indicated that there are no opportunities to utilise existing masts or telecommunication structures within the area. Similarly, no existing buildings or structures in the area have been found to be suitable locations to host the telecommunications equipment. Despite somewhat limited information to support the appellant's view, the Council indicates it does not disagree with these findings and I have no reasons to find otherwise.
13. I do not doubt that the cell search area for the proposal is extremely constrained. Nevertheless, given the harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the area, alternative locations must be robustly explored to understand whether more suitable sites for the development exist.
14. Several alternative locations have also been identified by the appellant but are also discounted for a variety of reasons. This includes issues of coverage, insufficient space, impacts on residential amenity and heritage constraints. However, the appellant's justification is largely vague and unsubstantiated. For example, the likely impacts on residential amenity at some of the alternative locations appear to be very similar to the appeal site. Similarly, where underground services are presented as a reason to discount a site, it is unclear whether this would prevent the proposed development or merely be an inconvenience.
15. Notably the Council has suggested a potentially more appropriate site for the installation to the side of an existing Tesco store at 80 Cove Road. I observed that the location suggested by the Council would be more discrete than the appeal site. This is due to its position between the flank wall of the Tesco Store and the side elevation of 82 – 86 Cove Road, rather than on a prominent corner of the street. This suggested site would also potentially allow the development to be set further back from the public highway reducing its visual prominence.
16. No robust justification has been provided by the appellant as to why the alternative site suggested by the Council is not suitable. Although reference to a lack of space has been made this is not supported by any technical information. Likewise, I am not convinced that the site's limited screening or relationship with neighbouring properties is sufficiently different to the appeal site to justify it being discounted.
17. Consequently, on the evidence before me, I am not persuaded that less harmful alternative sites are not suitable or available.

Conclusion

18. I acknowledge the importance of good, fast, cost-effective and reliable communications and the support that the Framework provides for high quality communications infrastructure. However, I conclude that the harm arising from the siting and appearance of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, would not be outweighed by the need for the installation to be sited as proposed, considering the potential for suitable alternatives.
19. Accordingly, for the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

Lewis Condé

INSPECTOR